



Suriname

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After over a decade of predominantly military rule, Suriname installed a freely elected Parliament and inaugurated a democratically chosen president in 1991. After generally free and fair elections in May 2000, the 51-member National Assembly elected Ronald Venetiaan of the National Party of Suriname (NPS) as President in August 2000; he replaced Jules Wijdenbosch of the National Democratic Party (NDP). Venetiaan previously had served as President in 1991-96. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and previous disputes over judicial appointees by the former president were alleviated in 2000 when the appointees in question resigned from the judiciary, which appears to be acting generally independently, although it is inefficient.

The armed forces are responsible for national security and border and immigration control; they are under the effective control of the civilian Minister of Defense. Civilian police bear primary responsibility for the maintenance of law and order; they report to the Ministry of Justice and Police. The first Venetiaan Government had reformed the military in 1995-96 by purging military officers and supporters of former dictator Desi Bouterse, who ruled the country in the 1980's. Bouterse's NDP won 10 seats in the National Assembly in 2000, 1 of which he occupies. Over the past few years, the party's influence within the military had declined steadily; however, during the year it remained constant. The military police continued to maintain responsibility for control of the country's borders and airports, but it has not investigated civilian crimes since 1989. Members of the security forces committed some human rights abuses.

The country's population is approximately 450,000, and the economy depends heavily on the export of bauxite derivatives. Unregulated gold mining is an increasingly important economic activity that highlights a lack of land rights for indigenous and tribal peoples and has a serious environmental impact. The Government and state-owned companies employ over half the working population. Overall economic conditions stabilized during the year, and estimated gross domestic product grew by approximately 3 percent. The inflation rate was 4.8 percent, compared with 82 percent in 2000 and 113 percent in 1999. Per capita annual income was approximately \$1,000.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, serious problems remained in some areas. Police mistreat detainees, particularly during arrests; guards abuse prisoners; and local detention facilities remain overcrowded. Lengthy pretrial detention is a problem, and the judiciary suffers from ineffectiveness and a huge case backlog. Unlike previous years, there was no harassment of journalists; however, media self-censorship continued. Societal discrimination against women, minorities, and tribal peoples persists. Violence against women and trafficking in women and girls are problems.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There was one report of an extrajudicial killing in the town of Albina, on the border with French Guiana. When the police took a man into custody during the summer on suspicion of motor bike theft, they took him to a detention area and handcuffed him. He allegedly tried to escape and was shot in the back of the head without warning. The victim's family called for an investigation into the shooting, but no additional information was available at year's end.

The Government has not addressed many past abuses, and they continue to be a focus of concern. The authorities have not taken action against prison guards who allegedly beat a prisoner to death in 1993. There has been no investigation into the 1986 massacre of civilians at the village of Moiwana.

In view of the human rights record of the Bouterse regime, many of whose members participated in the 1996-2000 Wijdenbosch Government, human rights organizations remained concerned about the potential for a deterioration of civil liberties.

After the elections in 2000, there were calls for the new Government to investigate the December 1982 killings by the Bouterse regime of 15 opposition leaders before the 18-year statute of limitations expired in December 2000. Accordingly, in October 2000, the Court of Justice began hearings on the killings in response to a request from relatives of the victims. Bouterse's lawyer sought to postpone the hearings, but the court denied his request. The court heard testimony from the victims' relatives, human rights activists, and the prosecutor's office, which had not yet made any investigation into the killings. Previously, Bouterse himself had requested an investigation, after the victims' relatives asked a Dutch court to prosecute him in that country. In September the Dutch court ruled that it did not have jurisdiction in such a case; relatives of two of the victims took the case to the European Court of Human Rights. Following an order from the Court of Justice, an examining judge continued an investigation into the killings, but no suspects had been charged or brought to trial by year's end.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

However, the Government has yet to take any action to investigate allegations of some disappearances that occurred under previous regimes.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Constitution prohibits inhuman treatment or punishment, but human rights groups continue to express concern about official mistreatment and have documented cases of police mistreatment of detainees, particularly during arrests, and guard abuse of prisoners.

There were a record number of complaints against the police force during the year for physical mistreatment. Citizens filed a total of 277 cases with the Personnel Investigation Department (OPZ), the majority of which were for physical mistreatment. The OPZ is an office within the Police Department that is responsible for investigating complaints against officers. It makes recommendations regarding whether or not an officer should be punished internally, or if criminal charges should be brought. Police officers have been charged with brutality, but no figures were available regarding sentencing.

Beatings by police are common. Police officers, who are not trained in prison work, serve as the jailers at local detention facilities, a situation that human rights groups assert contributes to the abuses. There are three state prisons and several detention facilities at police stations, where arrestees are detained until they appear before a judge for trial. Human rights activists are concerned about conditions in the prisons and especially about conditions in local detention facilities, which remain overcrowded. At police stations, guards allow detainees no exercise and only rarely permit them to leave their cells. Detainees and human rights groups also complain about inadequate prison meals, although families are permitted and encouraged to provide food to incarcerated relatives. There are no considerations for individuals who require a specific diet for religious reasons. Human rights monitors report that guards mistreat prisoners, and that medical care and living conditions are inadequate.

Prison conditions are poor, and in many cases they do not meet international standards. Prisoners also mistreat others, and the authorities usually do not punish prisoners for violence against other prisoners. Some prison facilities were renovated in recent years, which improved health and safety conditions. However, most incarceration facilities, especially older jails, remain seriously overcrowded, with as many as four times the number of detainees for which they were designed. In addition, these older prisons are unsanitary. There were several riots at detention facilities during the year, many in protest of poor living conditions. An army squad served as temporary guards following one riot. There was also an outbreak of tuberculosis at the main detention center in Paramaribo, which appeared to have been exacerbated by inadequate sanitary facilities. There were no deaths from the tuberculosis outbreak or prison riots.

In 1999 the human rights group Moiwana '86, a nongovernmental organization (NGO), issued a report that accused prison officials at two of the state prisons of using electrical shocks to discipline prisoners. The report further asserted that different ethnic groups receive different forms and degrees of punishments. Prison

officials denied the accusations, and the Government took no investigative action. Moiwana '86 did not pursue the issue further, although the group asserts that this procedure continues.

Women's jail and prison facilities and conditions are, in general, better than the men's facilities and conditions. There is a wing of an adult prison for boys under age 18 who have committed serious crimes. Juvenile facilities for boys between the ages of 10 and 18 within the adult prison were adequate; educational and recreational facilities were provided. There is no separate facility for girls under the age of 18. They are housed within the women's detention center and the women's section of one of the prison complexes.

Since 1996 Moiwana '86 has monitored the condition of prisoners. Representatives of the group report that in general they have access to prisoners and receive cooperation from prison officials on routine matters. When requesting access to individual prisoners, human rights monitors generally gain access quickly. However, if an individual has filed a complaint with the organization due to physical mistreatment, access often is delayed. The group has asked permission to visit certain prison sections on a regular basis to meet with inmates in general. The authorities granted the group permission to visit one prison on a regular basis, on the condition that they meet with the head of the prison following such visits. The group had not begun these visits at year's end and was waiting for permission to visit other jails and prisons on a regular basis. Moiwana '86 and the police previously cooperated to develop a detention officer training program for police guards working at the local detention facilities. The program consisted of lectures given at the state prison to both guards and prisoners.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the authorities generally respect these provisions in practice. However, delays have caused prisoners who appeal their sentences to remain in prison until a ruling is reached on their appeal, even if they have served the full term of their original sentence. Lawyers have filed complaints, but the problem has not been resolved.

The law provides that the police may detain for investigation for up to 14 days a person suspected of committing a crime for which the sentence is longer than 4 years. During the 14-day period, the law also permits incommunicado detention, which must be authorized by an assistant district attorney or a police inspector. Within the 14-day period, the police must bring the accused before a prosecutor to be charged formally. If additional time is needed to investigate the charge, a prosecutor may authorize the police to detain the suspect for an additional 30 days. Upon the expiration of the initial 44 days, a judge of instruction may authorize the police to hold the suspect for up to 120 additional days, in 30-day increments (for a total of 164 days), before the case is tried. The judge of instruction has the power to authorize release on bail, but that power is used rarely, if ever. On July 14, the lower courthouse burned, and the police suspect arson. The fire caused a delay both in investigations and in court proceedings. As a result, in August the Government enacted emergency legislation that lengthened the initial period an inmate may be held without judicial appearance to 120 days. A judge may twice extend the period by 30 days.

Pretrial detainees, who constitute a large percentage of inmates, routinely are held without being brought before a judge. The average length of pretrial detention varies, for lesser crimes it is from 30 to 45 days, while for more serious crimes, the maximum time is usually utilized. Detainees often are held in overcrowded detention cells at local police stations. Of those held in police custody or detention cells, a steadily growing number already had been convicted but not yet placed in prisons due to a lack of space in prison facilities.

The military police continued to observe the requirement to hand over to the civil police civilians arrested for committing a crime in their presence.

The Constitution does not prohibit specifically forced exile; however, it is not practiced.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, previous disputes over the appointing of judges to the bench undermined the independence of the judiciary in recent years. In 2000 the President appointed a new Solicitor General, and the Court of Justice confirmed him in September. The President has yet to confirm the Acting Attorney General, although he has served in that position since 2000. Appointment as Attorney General is a lifetime position. As a result of the conflict from previous years, the effectiveness of the civilian and military courts still was limited in practice, but at year's end the judiciary appeared to be acting generally independently, albeit inefficiently, since it is hampered by a large case backlog.

The judicial system consists of three lower courts and an appeals court, which is called the Court of Justice;

there is no Supreme Court. In July 1998, then-President Wijdenbosch named a new President of the Court of Justice and Prosecutor General without consulting with, and over the objections of, the sitting justices. Most legal authorities interpret the Constitution to require that consultation, and the members of the court refused to recognize the named President of the Court or Prosecutor General. In spite of the continued objections, President Wijdenbosch named additional justices without consultation in 1998. In 1999 the appointed President of the Court of Justice first swore in himself, and then he swore in the new justices. With the change in Government after the 2000 elections, the President of the Court and other disputed judges resigned. The 1987 Constitution calls for the establishment of an independent constitutional court, but this court has never been established.

The Constitution provides for the right to a fair public trial in which defendants have the right to counsel if needed. The courts assign lawyers in private practice to defend indigent prisoners and pays lawyers from public funds. However, the court-assigned lawyers, of which there are four, usually only appear at the trial, if they appear at all. The courts must, and in practice do, free a detainee who is not tried within the 164-day period. Trials are before a single judge, with the right of appeal. Due to the previous conflict over the legitimacy of the president of the Court and the justices and to the fire at the courthouse, there is a large backlog of cases in the judicial system.

Military personnel generally are not subject to civilian criminal law. A member of the armed forces accused of a crime immediately comes under military jurisdiction, and military police are responsible for all such investigations. Military prosecutions are directed by an officer on the public prosecutor's staff and take place in separate courts before two military judges and one civilian judge. The military courts follow the same rules of procedure as the civil courts. There is no appeal from the military to the civil system.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution provides for the right to privacy. The law requires warrants, which are issued by quasi-judicial officers who supervise criminal investigations, for searches. The police obtain them in the great majority of investigations. While in the past there were complaints of surveillance of human rights workers by members of the military police and the division of central intelligence, none were reported during the year. There is still a threat of forced resettlement of indigenous populations due to the granting of timber and gold concessions (see Section 5).

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government generally respects these rights; however, in practice there were a few reports of intimidation and harassment of journalists. Some media members continue to practice occasional self-censorship because of the history of intimidation and reprisals by certain elements of the former military leadership.

In May three men forced a Dutch journalist off the road and beat him. This journalist also had been beaten in 1998. Although both cases are officially still under investigation, no conclusion has been reached in either case. Both attacks appeared to be related to the journalist's investigation of the December 1982 murders (see Section 1.a.).

In July 2000, a group of Bouterse supporters harassed and attempted to beat a journalist outside the National Assembly. The journalist was known to be critical of Bouterse, and the attack took place the first day that Bouterse occupied his new seat in the Assembly. The police intervened, but the Bouterse supporters threatened to find the journalist anywhere in the country.

In April 2000, one of the two daily newspapers, De West, was firebombed. While officials maintain that an investigation is continuing, no suspects have been arrested.

The 2 daily newspapers, 11 television stations, and most of the radio stations are owned privately. Three television stations and two radio stations are owned publicly. Three companies, one owned publicly, provide cable television, which includes international channels. Many television and radio stations are broadcast only in a limited area. Two companies, one private and one public, offer unrestricted access to electronic media.

The Government does not restrict access to the Internet.

The Government does not restrict academic freedom.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. However, in response to a series of public demonstrations in May 1999, the Government announced that it intended to begin enforcing a 1930's law requiring a permit to hold a public demonstration or gathering. After the announcement, in late July 1999, the authorities detained two opposition leaders for demonstrating without a permit but quickly released them. However, subsequent public marches were allowed to proceed without permits.

The Constitution provides for freedom of association, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

Citizens may change their residence and workplaces freely and may travel abroad as they wish. Political dissidents who emigrated during the years of military rule are welcome to return. Few of them have chosen to do so, generally for economic reasons. Citizenship is not revoked for political reasons.

Although it is possible for persons to be granted refugee status under special circumstances, there are no provisions in the law for granting asylum or refugee status in accordance with the standards of the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. There were no such requests during the year.

The Government cooperates with the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. The issue of the provision of first asylum did not arise. There were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The Constitution provides for this right, but in the past the military prevented its effective exercise. Although the military twice has transferred power to elected civilian governments following coups, 2000 marked the second time since independence from the Netherlands in 1975 that one elected government succeeded another in accordance with constitutional provisions. The Government is still in the process of institutionalizing democratic, constitutional rule.

The Constitution stipulates that power and authority rest with the citizens and provides for the right to change the government through the direct election by secret ballot of a National Assembly of 51 members every 5 years. The National Assembly then elects the President by a two-thirds majority vote. If the legislature is unable to do so, as was the case both in the 1991 and 1996 national elections, the Constitution provides that a national people's assembly, composed of Members of Parliament and regional and local officials, shall elect the President.

The law allows early elections with the concurrence of both the National Assembly and the President; in May 1999, widespread street demonstrations triggered by the declining economy forced the Government of then-President Wijdenbosch to call early elections, which were held in May 2000. After those elections, which observers considered to be generally free and fair, the National Assembly elected NPS leader Ronald Venetiaan as President in August 2000.

The Constitution provides for the organization and functioning of political parties. Many parties and political coalitions are represented in the National Assembly. President Venetiaan formed a cabinet from members of the New Front coalition, comprised of the NPS, a predominantly Creole party; the Progressive Reform Party, a predominantly Hindustani party; the Suriname Labor Party, a political wing of the largest labor union; and Pertjaja Luhur, a predominantly Javanese party.

There are historical and cultural impediments to equal participation by women in leadership positions in government and political parties, and the percentage of women in government and politics does not correspond to their percentage of the population. In the past, most women were expected to fulfill the roles of housewife and mother, thereby limiting opportunities to gain political experience or position. Participation by women in politics (and other fields) generally was considered inappropriate. While women have made limited gains in attaining political power in recent years, political circles remain under the influence of traditional male-dominated groups, and women are disadvantaged in seeking high public office. The number of women in the National Assembly increased from 9 to 10 during the year, following the death of a male parliamentarian. In 2000 the Assembly appointed a woman as vice chairperson. The Cabinet includes one woman as Minister of Foreign Affairs, another as Minister of Internal Affairs, and a third as Deputy Minister of Social Affairs. In February the first female member of the Court of Justice was sworn in.

Although the Constitution prohibits racial and religious discrimination, several factors limit the participation of Maroons (descendants of escaped slaves who fled to the interior to avoid recapture) and Amerindians in the political process. Most of the country's political activity takes place in the capital and a narrow belt running east and west of it along the coast. The Maroons and Amerindians are concentrated in remote areas in the interior and therefore have limited access to, and influence on, the political process. Voters elected the first Amerindians to the National Assembly in 1996. In the May 2000 elections, voters elected eight Maroons and one Amerindian to the National Assembly. There are no Maroons or Amerindians in the Cabinet.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Human rights groups operate without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases; however, government officials generally are not cooperative or responsive to their views. While in past years there were complaints of surveillance of human rights workers by members of the military police and the division of central intelligence, no such surveillance was reported during the year.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution and laws, with the exception of ethnic marriage laws, do not differentiate among citizens on the basis of their ethnic origins, religious affiliations, or other cultural differences. However, in practice several groups within society suffer various forms of discrimination.

Women

Violence against women is a problem. The law does not differentiate between domestic violence and other forms of assault. The Government has not addressed specifically the problem of violence against women. According to a national women's group, victims continue to report cases of violence against women and complain of an inadequate response from the Government and society to what appears to be a trend of increasing family violence. No reliable statistics are available as to the extent of the problem. However, the NGO Stop the Violence Against Women stated that among those women who report their abuse to the group, the average abused woman is married, between the ages of 25 and 50, has 2 to 3 children, and is employed in a low-paying job. Although the police have been reluctant to intervene in instances of domestic violence, a national women's group noted that police attitudes have improved significantly as a result of training conducted in 1999. For example, two police stations opened victims' rooms during the year in order to provide better services to victims of all kinds of crimes.

There are no specific laws to protect women against sexual exploitation. Prostitution is illegal; however, law enforcement officials do not enforce prostitution laws or arrest women for prostitution unless they are working on the street. Police allow many "brothel-type" establishments to operate, and officials assert that they make random checks on the brothels twice a month to see if women are being abused or held against their will. In spite of this effort, there were credible reports of trafficking in women for prostitution (see Section 6.f.).

There are no laws prohibiting sexual harassment, and it does occur.

Women have the right to equal access to education, employment, and property. Nevertheless, social pressures and customs, especially in rural areas, inhibit their full exercise of these rights, particularly in the areas of marriage and inheritance. Women experience economic discrimination in access to employment and in rates of pay for the same or substantially similar work. A report published in March showed that 89 percent of women are employed in entry-level positions, 9 percent have mid-level jobs, and 3 percent hold management positions. More than 60 percent of women work in traditionally female administrative or secretarial jobs. The Government has not made specific efforts to combat economic discrimination.

The National Women's Center is a government agency devoted to women's issues; there is also a women's policy coordinator. Their effectiveness is limited severely by financial and staffing constraints. The principal concerns of women's groups are political representation, economic vulnerability, violence, and discrimination.

Children

The Government allocates only limited resources to ensure safeguards for the human rights and welfare of children. School is compulsory until 12 years of age, but some school-age children do not have access to education due to a lack of transportation, facilities, or teachers. School attendance is free; however, most public schools impose a nominal enrollment fee, ranging from \$4 to \$24 (Sf10,000 to Sf60,000) a year. If a family is unable to pay, the Government provides assistance. Families must supply uniforms, books, and miscellaneous supplies. Approximately 70 percent of children in cities attend school. Children in the interior do not receive the same level of education as those in the city, and as few as 40 percent actually attend school. Both students and parents complained about the Government's decision to double enrollment fees for public school, which occurred both in 1999 and 2000. Fees during the year remained at the 2000 level. Children face increasing economic pressure to discontinue their education in order to work (see Section 6.d.). There is no legal difference in the treatment of girls and boys in education or health care services, and in practice both are treated fairly equally.

There are continuing reports of malnutrition among poor children, but it is difficult to quantify the extent of the problem. In the capital, where most of the country's population is concentrated, there are several orphanages and one privately funded shelter for sexually abused children. Elsewhere, distressed children usually must rely on the resources of their extended families. In 2000 there were credible reports of hospitals refusing to hand newborns over to their mothers until hospital bills were paid in full, sending the infants instead to a state facility. The Government denied that such refusals occurred and stated that there was no such policy. The investigation was dropped by the NGO Moiwana '86 because it could not prove that the Government was the sole entity in charge of the hospital.

There is no societal pattern of abuse directed against children; however, some children are exploited sexually, and there were credible reports of trafficking in girls for prostitution (see Section 6.f.). There was increased awareness of sexual abuse of children during the year, although the number of reports declined. During the year, a local NGO mounted a campaign against child sexual abuse in a newspaper and on the radio to increase awareness. The legal age of sexual consent is 14; however, it is not enforced strictly, and the Asian Marriage Law lowers the marriage age for children of Asian descent to 12 years for girls and 15 years for boys. Otherwise, one must be 31 years old to marry without parental permission.

Persons with Disabilities

There are no laws concerning persons with disabilities and no provisions for making private or public buildings accessible to them. There are also no laws mandating that they be given equal consideration when seeking jobs or housing. However, there are some training programs for the blind and others with disabilities. In practice persons with disabilities suffer from discrimination when applying for jobs and services.

Indigenous People

The Constitution affords no special protection for, or recognition of, indigenous people. Most Amerindians suffer a number of disadvantages and have only limited ability to participate in decisions affecting their lands, cultures, traditions, and natural resources. The country's political life, educational opportunities, and jobs are concentrated in the capital and its environs, while the majority of Amerindians (as well as Maroons) live in the interior. Government services in the interior are largely unavailable, and much of the infrastructure was destroyed during the 1986-91 domestic insurgencies; progress in reestablishing services and rebuilding the infrastructure has been very slow.

The Government-appointed Consultative Council for the Development of the Interior, provided for in the 1992 peace accords that formally ended the insurgencies, includes representatives of the Maroon and Amerindian communities. However, the Government did not consult with representatives of these communities about the granting of gold and timber concessions on indigenous and tribal lands. Following demonstrations in July by veterans of the Jungle Commando, who played a large role in the insurgencies, their de facto leader Ronny Brunswijk met with the Minister of Regional Development. The meeting resulted in a promise of quarterly meetings to monitor the implementation of the native land rights portion of the 1992 peace accords; however, at year's end neither the quarterly meetings nor the implementation had occurred.

Organizations representing Maroon and Amerindian communities complain that small-scale mining operations,

mainly by illegal Brazilian gold miners, dig trenches that cut residents off from their agricultural land and threaten to drive them away from their traditional settlements. Mercury runoff from these operations also contaminates and threatens traditional food source areas. During the year, villagers from the Maroon village of Kayapaati filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights stating that lumber operations were threatening their culture and way of life. The villagers sought observance of a 1762 treaty between their ancestors and Dutch colonial authorities, which granted ownership of the interior to the tribes as long as they occupy the land.

Maroon and Amerindian groups continue to cooperate with each other in order to exercise their rights more effectively. During an annual meeting in September, the Association of Indigenous Village Chiefs in Suriname discussed socio-economic problems, land rights, nature reserves, and biodiversity. The leaders threatened to isolate the western part of the country if the Government did not take measures against uncontrolled logging near indigenous villages. The leaders want the Government to honor provisions of the peace accords that establish economic zones around both Maroon and Indigenous communities.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The Constitution protects the right of workers to associate and to choose their representatives democratically. Nearly 60 percent of the work force is organized into unions, and most unions belong to one of the country's six major labor federations. Unions are independent of the Government but play an active role in politics. The small Labor Party historically has been a very influential force in government.

The Constitution provides for the right to strike. Civil servants have the right to strike, and strikes in both the public and private sectors are common as workers try to regain wages lost to inflation in previous years.

Significant strikes during the year included a 4-day-long fire-fighters' strike, during which union members refused to participate in training, maintenance, and administrative activities. The prison guard force struck three times for 1 to 3 days each time. Nurses at a government hospital conducted a work-to-rule action for more than 2 weeks. The union exempted nurses in critical departments, such as intensive care, from the action.

There are no restrictions on unions' international activities. Unions are active members of both the International Labor Organization and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The Constitution explicitly recognizes these rights, and the authorities respect them in practice. Collective bargaining agreements cover approximately 50 percent of the labor force. Bauxite industry workers are organized, but gold miners are not. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination by employers, and there are effective mechanisms for resolving complaints of such discrimination. Employers must have prior permission from the Ministry of Labor to fire workers, except when discharging an employee for cause. The Labor Ministry individually reviews dismissals for cause; if it finds a discharge unjustified, the employee must be reinstated.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The Constitution prohibits forced or compulsory labor; however, there were credible reports of trafficking in women and girls for prostitution (see Section 6.f.). The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and such practices (other than trafficking) generally are not known to occur.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years; however, the Ministry of Labor and the police enforce this law only sporadically. Children under 14 years of age work as street vendors, newspaper sellers, or shop assistants. Working hours for youths are not limited in comparison with the regular work force. School attendance is compulsory until 12 years of age. The Government has not ratified the International Labor Organization's Convention 182 on elimination of the worst forms of child labor. The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children; trafficking of girls for prostitution does occur (see Sections 6.c. and 6.f.), but there were no other reports of such practices.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no minimum wage legislation. Including a cost of living allowance, the lowest wage for civil servants is about \$100 (Sf244,000) per month. This salary level makes it very difficult to provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. Government employees, who constitute approximately 50 percent of the work force of 100,000 persons, frequently supplement their salaries with second or third jobs, often in the informal sector. The President and Council of Ministers set and approve civil service wage increases.

Work in excess of 9 hours per day or 45 hours per week on a regular basis requires special government permission, which is granted routinely. Such overtime work earns premium pay. The law requires one 24-hour rest period per week.

A 10- to 12-member inspectorate in the Occupational Health and Safety Division of the Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing legislated occupational safety and health regulations. Resource constraints and lack of trained personnel preclude the division from making regular inspections of industry. Accident rates in local industry do not appear to be high, and the key bauxite industry has an excellent safety record. However, there is no law authorizing workers to refuse to work in circumstances they deem unsafe. They must appeal to the inspectorate to declare the workplace situation unsafe.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The only laws that prohibit trafficking in persons are dated "white slavery laws" that are enforced rarely, and apply only to women and children. There were credible reports of trafficking in women and girls to the country for prostitution. Women and girls from the interior are brought to the capital city and also to various gold mining locations in the interior. Several clubs in the capital also are known for recruiting women from Brazil and the Caribbean. While prostitution is illegal, the law is not enforced. The police have an informal agreement with many "hotel" or brothel owners to allow them to proceed with their business as long as they do not hold the women's passports and the women are not mistreated. Random checks are performed on the establishments weekly; in several instances, police officers work as advisers to the owners.

Brothel owners often attempt to hold airline tickets for women whom they have paid to bring to the country, to be sure that the women complete their contracts. The police have arranged a compromise with the brothels and the prostitutes that in such instances where disagreements arise, the police will hold the ticket until an agreement is reached. There have been some reported instances of individuals brought to the country under false pretenses and then forced to work as prostitutes. In cases where the victims have been able to alert the police, the police have returned them to their country of origin. One club owner in Paramaribo was convicted in Brazil during the year for trafficking in women.

There were credible reports of individuals using the country as a transit point to transport Brazilian women to Europe and the United States for purposes of prostitution. In addition, alien smuggling organizations use the country as an intermediate destination to smuggle Chinese and Indian nationals, including women and girls, to the United States, where frequently they are forced into bonded-labor situations.